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310554Z Jan 06

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 ANKARA 000348

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2006

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES

BRIEFING

EDITORIAL OPINION

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HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Erdogan: HAMAS, Israel Must Recognize Each Other - Milliyet 1/29

US to Cut 400 Million USD of Aid to Palestine - Vatan 1/29

US: HAMAS Must Denounce Terror - Vatan 1/28

EU Warns Ankara About Iran - Sabah

Iran Warns: If Attacked, We'll Strike Israel - Vatan 1/29

Newsweek: US Military Negotiates with Resisters in Iraq - Sabah

Georgia Asks for Turkey's Support to Join NATO in 2008 - Milliyet

Bill Gates Promises More Investment in Turkey - Vatan

ABC Reporter, a Cameraman Heavily Wounded in Iraq - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS

Gul: Turkey's Cyprus Proposal a Huge Opportunity for Peace - Yeni Safak

Annan to Launch New Cyprus Initiative in May - Zaman 1/28

Erdogan: Turkey May Mediate Between HAMAS, Israel - Yeni Safak 1/28

HAMAS Leader: US Not Our Enemy - Yeni Safak

HAMAS Will Establish Palestine Army - Yeni Safak 1/29

Merkel: Germany, EU May Cut Financial Aid to Palestine - Zaman

Merkel: Iran a Threat against Democratic World - Cumhuriyet

Americans Want Military Action if Iran Continues Nuclear

Program - Zaman 1/29

Pope Benedict XVI to Visit Turkey in November - Yeni Safak

1/29

Athens Mayor Bakoyani to Become Greece's FM - Radikal 1/29

US Troops Detain Insurgents' Wives in Iraq - Cumhuriyet 1/29

4 Killed in Insurgent Attacks Against Churches in Baghdad,

Kirkuk - Cumhuriyet

Saddam, Angered at New Judge, Leaves Courtroom - Zaman

BRIEFING

Erdogan Offers Turkey's Mediation between Israel and Palestine: Weekend papers quote Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan as saying, in Davos, that Turkey is ready to act as a mediator between Israel and the new Palestinian administration led by HAMAS. Erdogan's remarks have 'stunned' the international community, say papers. Turkish officials in Ankara told the press that Erdogan's proposal was well intentioned, but not realistic, and that it will not receive a positive response from the international community.

Alpogan Wraps Up Meetings in US: On Friday, Turkish National Security Council (NSC) Secretary General Yigit Alpogan told the press in Washington, that he had explained to Americans Turkey's views on issues such as Ankara's Cyprus proposal, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenian genocide, and the PKK. Alpogan said there was no sense in holding a referendum in Kirkuk next year, since Kurdish efforts to change the demography of the oil-rich Iraqi city continue. He said a referendum held solely for Kirkuk would have adverse effects on Iraq as a whole, and called on the US to 'pay attention' to the issue.

Turkey favors a diplomatic process regarding Iran's nuclear program, Alpogan said, warning that severe pressure from the international community may boost the nationalistic feelings of Iranians. Alpogan also emphasized that Turkey may act as a 'facilitator' between Syria and the western world, warning Damascus whenever necessary. Alpogan noted that the United

States has an 'image problem' in Turkey explaining that, 'President Bush says that the US opposes all forms of terrorism. Yet the U.S. continues to merely watch the presence of PKK terrorists in northern Iraq. A step taken against the PKK would change for the good Turkish public opinion of the US.' Alpogan added that Turkish-American relations passed through a tough period at the end of 2004, but that ties have been improving since June 2005.

**EU Expects Stronger Turkish Reaction against Iran:** The European Union (EU) has been pressing Ankara to adopt a hard-line policy against Tehran, complaining that there was no change in Turkish statements regarding Iran, despite rising tensions among Iran and the international community, Monday papers report. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources said that Turkey has to preserve the balance, adding that for the time being, Ankara is determined to avoid moves aimed at increasing the pressure on Iran. However, Turkey supports EU views regarding Iran, and is determined to act parallel with the EU in the crisis.

**Talabani Interviews Turkish Daily:** Iraq President Jalal Talabani said, in an exclusive interview with the English-language daily "The New Anatolian" on Monday, that the Kurds were discussing giving the Turkmen autonomy in northern regions where they form the majority in the new constitution that is being drafted for the Kurdistan region. Talabani repeated that there will be no Kurdish independence, especially without the approval of Turkey. 'The Arab Shiites have Iran, the Arab Sunnis have the Arab states and especially Saudi Arabia. We only have Turkey,' Talabani said.

According to Talabani, the worst terrorists in Iraq belong to the Zarqawi group and al-Qaida. 'They regard ordinary Muslims as their enemies if they are not fundamentalists. They do not regard the Shiites as real Muslims. They regard moderate Sunnis as people who have given up the Islamic faith, committing the greatest sin,' he said. The Iraqi president said there are also extremist Sunni Arabs who have been driven to violence because they were angered by US troops, the Shiite Arabs, the Kurds or even by the government. 'A national unity government can solve this problem. The more Sunni Arabs are involved in the political process, the more Sunni extremism will die down.' Talabani expects the Sunni insurgency to end in 'about six months.' He noted the Americans are talking with the Sunni Arabs to bring them back into the political process. Talabani added that the dialogue between the US and the Sunnis has created concerns among the Shiite Arabs that Washington will help the Sunnis. 'Shiite Arabs are scared that the Sunni Arabs will make a comeback,' he said. Such a comeback is impossible, Talabani said, adding that the Shiite majority will continue to play a major role in Iraq. Talabani also noted that the Kurds have emerged as a part of the solution in Iraq, and not as the problem: 'We have become the uniting factor in Iraq.' Talabani rejects the notion that the Shiites in Iraq are really controlled by Iran. 'The Arab Shiites say Najaf is the Vatican of the Shiite world while the Iranians are trying to promote Qum as the Vatican. Iraqi Arabs do not recognize the religious superiority of the grand ayatollah in Iran,' he emphasized. Talabani noted that no one, including the radical Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, wants the Americans to go. The Iraqi president said the pullout of American troops will only create a civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

**Erdogan Attends Davos Meetings:** Addressing the World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, Switzerland, Prime Minister Erdogan said that Turkey expects five billion USD of annual global investment inflow between 2006 and 2007, weekend papers report. Erdogan stressed that Turkey has achieved a growth rate of about 20 percent in the past three years, becoming the 17th largest economy in the world. 'Three years ago, Turkey was a country full of corruption, particularly in the financial sector. Today, the financial sector in Turkey is among the most profitable, although bankrupt banks, taken over by the state, cost Turkey approximately 50 billion USD. For the time being, state and private banks are making high profits,' Erdogan said. The AK Party rule in the past three years has transitioned Turkey from closed to open society, and from closed to open economy, according to Erdogan. The PM expects Turkey to draw 5 billion USD of global capital between 2006 and 2007. 'Turkey is the last bridge that connects Europe to the East, and the East to Europe. Turkey, a country of opportunities, aims to be number one in regional trade,' Erdogan emphasized.

**Belgian Gendarme Examines Turks Linked to Illegal Activities:** Monday "Aksam" claims that the gendarme in Belgium, without notifying the government, had secretly compiled information about 90,330 Turks linked to organized crime and narcotics smuggling. Belgian lawmakers filed an investigation into the secret gendarme operation. The scandal has been hushed up by a committee headed by judge

Freddy Troch. Troch is the chief justice of the Belgian court in Bruges that will hear the case of Turkish terrorist Fehriye Erdal, says "Aksam." Erdal is wanted in Turkey for the assassination of famous Turkish businessman Ozdemir Sabanci.

**Bird Flu Detected in Turkish Cyprus:** A statement issued by the European Commission announced that the deadly H5N1 bird flu strain was found in poultry samples sent from Turkish Cyprus to a laboratory in Britain, Monday papers report. The commission declared that the EU will send experts to the region to investigate the situation. Papers speculate that the Greek Cypriots may close the Turkish Cypriot border to contain the disease. Meanwhile, Turkish Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker said over the weekend that the EU had removed restrictions on the importation of milk and poultry from Turkey.

**Pope May Visit Turkey in November:** Sunday papers report a Vatican source as saying over the weekend that Pope Benedict XVI will probably visit Turkey on November 30 to coincide with St. Andrew's Day, though no date has been fixed yet. Sunday "Hurriyet" says that Ankara has declined to confirm the report. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I had invited Benedict XVI to attend St. Andrew's Day last November. However, the invitation was not matched by Ankara, which asked the Pope to come in 2006 instead.

**AKP MPs Cold to Turkey's Strategic Partnership with US:** An opinion survey conducted among the ruling AKP lawmakers, provincial leaders, and mayors says that 71 percent support EU membership and 61 percent support birth control. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents voiced opposition to gay marriages, 85 percent to extramarital relations, and 80 percent to abortion. Most of the AKP members are cold to the idea of a strategic partnership between the US and Turkey, according to the survey.

**Bill Gates Pledges to Continue Investment in Turkey:** Microsoft's Bill Gates, the world computer software giant and the world's richest man, pledged to continue investments in Turkey. Gates was received by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday evening in Istanbul. Erdogan said that his government supports the establishment of a 'silicon valley' in Turkey. 'We want global companies to choose Turkey as their technology base,' Erdogan said. Gates praised Turkey's stance on information technology, saying that Turkey was expanding use of the Internet while some countries are restricting it. 'We will continue to invest in Turkey. Turkey has a very bright future,' Gates said. Gates will attend a meeting with Turkish university students in Istanbul on Monday.

#### EDITORIAL OPINION: Palestine/Hamas

**"Understanding Palestine by Looking at Hamas"**  
Cengiz Candar commented in the tabloid "Bugun" (1/30): "There is concern about whether the peace process will stop, following the election victory of Hamas. The question is, was there a genuinely working peace process? If there was, how could we explain the Israeli security wall? If there was, how could we possibly explain the last days of Arafat in Ramallah surrounded by Israel? In sum, what comes around goes around for Israel. Palestine has now started a new chapter with newly emerging facts. Success may take some time and may not actually happen in the end. Yet the problem is not only Hamas, it is also Israeli policies, which led to the existence of Hamas and created the conditions for election victory. Following the Israeli elections, which are scheduled for March 28, we will have an Israel without Sharon and a Palestine with Hamas. Speaking in realistic terms, Hamas cannot put down arms without first seeing the election results in Israel. Hamas will try to wait and see tangible clues about the elimination of Israeli occupation before abandoning its trump card."

**"The Hamas Era in Palestine"**  
Yilmaz Oztuna commented in the conservative "Turkiye" (1/30): "The main reason for Al Fath's defeat is its involvement in severe corruption. Al Fath abused billions in Arab aid as well as Arafat's heritage. However both the US and Israel recognize Hamas as an Iranian-linked terrorist organization, not a political party. Even if Hamas agrees to a coalition with Al Fath, it is still unlikely that Israel will recognize the government. Cutting off the Iranian link seems impossible for Hamas. The only possibility for Hamas is to give up on terror. This is exactly what Turkey hopes to see happen. Considering the current atmosphere, it is also very likely that violence will reoccur in Palestine. The Shiite movement has gained significant ground in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. And the movement will try to spread to a broader region. All of this means, the tension will get even higher in the Middle East."

"The Lesson and Opportunity with Hamas Victory"  
Washington-based Yasemin Congar wrote in the mainstream "Milliyet" (1/30): "Can we take the victory of Hamas, which is a violent and radical Islamist organization, as a chance for peace? It may sound way too optimistic, but there are some in Washington who believe that the election victory of Hamas can be a chance for peace. First of all, following the legitimate election process, there is no other way than to accept Hamas' rule. Both international and regional players should concentrate on forcing Hamas to make a choice between democracy and terrorism. The international community should persuade the Palestinian people that the way toward becoming a state is through the democratic choice of Hamas. The international community should be able to form policies in this regard and should also prevent Iran and Syria's negative influence on Palestine. Can this be successful in the end? Is it really possible to see Hamas change? The optimistic ones in Washington believe that it is worth trying."

WILSON